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AUTHOR Conone, Ruth M.
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ABSTRACT

The key to positioning is the creation of a clear benefit image in the consumer's mind. One positioning strategy is creating in the prospect's mind a position that takes into consideration the company's or agency's strengths and weaknesses as well as those of its competitors. Another strategy is to gain entry into a position ladder owned by someone else. A third is projecting a broad based mission. The Cooperative Extension Service (CES), for example, ought to define its purpose as education in a general sense, not education limited to specific terms. Organizations that identify with specific problems run the risk of becoming obsolete in a relatively short time. With education as the central positioning focus, the specific objects and audiences of CES will change over time. Positioning is a concept that has merit for specific major programs, program areas of Extension, and Extension in general at the state and national levels. The difficulty in identifying a concise national policy statement agreeable to all is obvious; the potential benefits to the CES are also obvious. (YLB)

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Ruth M. Conone

POSITIONING

Positioning is the creation of an image in the mind of clientele.[1] Advertising has made extensive use of the concept. The primary focus is on the mind of the receiver, rather than on the product. The key is creating a clear benefit image in the consumer's mind.

According to Al Ries and Jack Trout in their book Position: The Battle for Your Mind, yearly per capita consumption of advertising in America today is $376.62[2] Spending $1 million a year on advertising is equivalent to bombarding the average consumer with less than a half cent of advertising spread out over 365 days. These are factors business considers in advertising.

In order to be successful, a segment of the market needs to be targeted. Then the information that has the best chance of getting through needs to be focused on that target.

With almost half of the jobs in the US in some form of information transmission, people are trying to cope with a barrage of information coming to them.

Positioning is an organized system for finding a window in the mind. A company or agency must create in the prospect's mind, a position that takes into consideration their own strengths and weaknesses and those of its competitors as well.

Avis Rent-A-Car lost money for 13 years when they were competing with Hertz for the No. 1 position. Then they admitted they were No. 2, said in their ads they try harder because they are No. 2 and started to make money. The first year they made $1.2 million, the second year $2.6 million, the third year $5 million. Then the company was sold to ITT.

Another positioning strategy is to worm your way onto a position/ladder owned by someone else. Coke and Pepsi account for two out of three soft drinks

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consumed in the United States. 7-UP linked its product to what was already in the mind of the consumer and created the "uncola" position as an alternative to a cola drink. The three rungs on the cola ladder might be visualized as: One, Coke; Two, Pepsi, and Three, 7-Up. The uncola concept is not inside a 7-UP can, it is inside the cola drinker's head.

Many agencies and organizations are delivering adult non credit education. What is unique about educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service? What image does CES attempt to establish in clientele's minds? A county-state- federal partnership? An affiliation with a land grant university? Research base of its programs? Are these components of the product rather than a focus on the mind of the client?

In The Cooperative Extension Service: A National Assessment by Warner and Christenson the issue of whether the mission should be broadly based or narrowly defined is explored.

Organizations that identify with specific problems run the risk of becoming obsolete in a relatively short time. Naisbitt[3] uses the example of the railroad industry. If leaders of that industry had conceptualized their mission (positioned themselves) as a comprehensive transportation system, instead of limiting themselves to only railroading, they likely would have been more successful. A comprehensive system would have combined truck, rail and air transport. They positioned themselves with a single mode of transportation and as the importance of rail transportation lessened, the rail industry declined.

As the Tuberculosis Society recognized the decline in the incidence of tuberculosis; it repositioned itself as the American Lung Association.

Warner and Christenson argue that Extension needs to continue to define its purpose as education, not in specific terms such as corn production, family

resource management, insect control, or youth development. With education as the central positioning focus, the specific subjects and audiences will change over time.

What is the position we want to establish for CES? What is the "hole" in the adult education market that we are targeting?

Putting knowledge to work

Unbiased information for today's concerns

Knowledge for living

Information in action: Your land grant university

A national or state positioning strategy could have tremendous benefits to our organization.

Positioning is not

Focus on product

So specific as to be short term

Changed frequently

Positioning is

Establishing leadership by creating a clientele mind set.

Examples of Successes

"The real thing"

"The uncola"

"We bring good things to you" (GE)

"Diehard battery" (Sears)

"Eveready battery" (Union Carbide)

Proctor & Gamble creates a clear position for each product:

Tide makes clothes "white".

Cheer makes them "whiter than white"

Bold makes them "bright"

Examples of Unsuccessful business positioning

1. Line extension - one name used for a series of product.

   Heinz - pickles, catsup or baby Food

   Kraft - cheese, mayonnaise, or salad dressing

   Neither have any products that are number 1 volume of sale

2. Alka Seltzer Plus took business from Alka Seltzer, not Dristan or Contac.

3. Using initials when you are not well known - CES is not enough. FBI and IRS have meaning.

   In home economics, the 4 areas of program focus from New Initiatives are used to articulate priorities:

   Food Nutrition and Health

   Family Resource Management

   Energy and Environment

   Family Strengths

These are being positioned as Knowledge for Living or Putting Knowledge to Work in several states.

Positioning is a concept that has merit for specific major programs, program areas of Extension, and Extension in total at the state and national level. The difficulty in identifying a concise national position statement that would be agreeable to all parties is obvious. The potential benefits to the Extension Service are also obvious.

4-H has used its name to achieve public visibility. Although many may not know what the 4-H stands for (Head, Heart, Hands, and Health) in Warner and Christenson's assessment, 77% of the national population sample had heard of 4-H but only about 40% had heard of home economics, agriculture or community development.

Reasons 4-H has the greatest visibility are that the name is short, easy

to remember, and has not changed over time. Also the national 4-H office has provided states with television and radio PSA's and literature for promotion activities. Another motto "learn by doing" has often been used to portray what 4-H stands for. More recently focus on family members working together has become prominent. As I interviewed parents, members and leaders at a 4-H home economics judging day last summer and asked what the major benefit of 4-H was, several parents indicated it provides a vehicle for parents and their children to work together. Members and leaders indicated 4-H gives them opportunities to try activities they probably would not otherwise try. Responses such as these can be used to support the central position of the organization.

Development of a positioning strategy

1. What is the product?
2. What is the mind set to be created for the product?
   a. What is the unique niche?
   b. What is the value of the program?

REFERENCES

1. Ries, Al and Jack Trout, Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind, McGraw Hill Co., New York, 1986.

2. Ibid.

3. Naisbitt, John, Megatrends: 10 New Directions Transforming Our Lives, Warner Books, New York, 1982.